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 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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 Dear Mr. St Germain:

Your letter of December 6, 1971, requested our comments and explanation as to why a construction contract at the Naval Underwater Systems Center, Newport, Rhode Island, required that the contractor for balancing the heating and ventilating systems be a certified member of the Associated Air Balance Council. You pointed out that on May 27, 1971, the Navy denied the prime contractor's request for approval of the firm of R. D. Searle Associates, 104 Water View Avenue, Riverside, Rhode Island, to do this work because the latter was not a certified member of the council.

Searle Associates was again disapproved for this work on August 6, 1971. By letter of November 19, 1971, Mr. Raymond D. Searle brought the matter to the attention of the Secretary of the Navy. The Secretary directed the letter to Headquarters, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Washington, D.C., which found an error in the specifications and took action that resulted in the approval of Searle Associates on November 30, 1971. Searle Associates balanced the heating and ventilating systems during the period December 3 to 16, 1971.

In his reply to Mr. Searle on December 7, 1971, the Secretary stated that it was not Navy policy to restrict balancing of heating and ventilating systems to members of the Associated Air Balance Council and that the specifications should have required only that the firm performing the work meet the standards for membership in the council. Another Navy official assured us that the membership requirement had been erroneously included by the design firm which prepared the specifications and that the error should have been detected in the Navy's usual review processes. Also we were advised that the Navy never had any question as to Searle Associates' qualifications to perform the work.

We interviewed officials and reviewed documents of the Naval Public Works Center and of the Office of the Resident Officer in Charge of Construction in Newport. We also discussed this matter with the Executive Officer, Northern

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Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Please let us know if we can assist you further.

Sincerely yours,



Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States

The Honorable Fernand J. St Germain  
House of Representatives